

Army 101

Harris, RB, MF
SM, HC, JL

12/17/70

Dear Senator Ervin,

I write to thank and praise you for your added exposure of military interference with Constitutional rights, to offer what information I may have that may be relevant, and to offer a few suggestions.

I am among those spied upon. In one case, where the espionage was contracted out, I have carbon copies of it. (This was not by the Army, was for a CIA front in Washington, whose identification, bank-account identification, check, letterhead and envelope I have.) My mail has been regularly interfered with, in several cases at considerable cost to me and I think I can not unreasonably believe in two cases to the end that publication of books was impeded and prevented. My baggage has been intercepted and rifled, my property damaged, my motel room examined, things like that.

Until the NBC "First Tuesday" show exposing military-intelligence intrusion into domestic civilian affairs, except where I knew this was done by the CIA, I had assumed this was by the FBI, which is not pleased with my writing. I have reason to believe some of this has been by the FBI, but after hearing of the Minneapolis Army activities, I think I should tell you of my experiences there.

My recent writing has been about political assassinations, particularly that of President Kennedy. This, necessarily, entails examination of the federal investigation of it and exposure of what the various investigators sought to hide and how they accomplished it.

In mid-May 1967 I was asked to make an address at the University of Minnesota at Minneapolis. Prior to that I broadcast on a local radio station for about 18 hours, answering phoned-in questions. In both cases, my focus was on the functioning of our society and its integrity, in the context of the assassinations and their investigations, with references to intrusions into and interferences with this work and what I regard as first-amendment rights.

Prior to the beginning of my talk, attended by about 2,000, mostly students, several students spotted some older men with a hidden tape recorder. This, of course, perfectly illustrated my point. I fear I embarrassed these men by announcing their presence, telling them not to worry about making a recording because I had arranged for a dub of that made by the university to be available to them (as I had), and by such kindnesses as spelling names, asking if I was speaking too rapidly, and things like that.

At the end of my talk, among those who approached me was a student who, by happenstance, had, while on vacation in New Orleans in August 1963, photographed the arrest of Lee Harvey Oswald. My subsequent investigation confirmed that although this man had given his film to the FBI, there exists in the Warren Commission record no indication of it and no copy of the film. Another, similar amateur film, the existence of which could not be hidden, was never given to the Commission. In both cases, the men with the film told me their originals had been edited and returned by the FBI, which kept the originals.

Immediately, I went to this young man's home, where we got the film and took it to a university projector for viewing. There was every reason for anyone

who might have been following me to believe that when I took a plane that evening I had this film with me. I didn't. I gave it to a local friend to have it copies there.

I saw my luggage go down the chute when I checked in with Braniff. The plane's first stop was Kansas City, where I left it. By then my luggage had disappeared. Search of the plane failed to locate it - and I insisted that the plane be held and this done. Braniff phoned Minneapolis, which reported the luggage had not been forgotten. It turned up several days later, in the possession of a different airline and in a city to which my plane did not go. By the time I got it, my Val-a-pak had been ruined and ransacked, every scrap of paper in in, including expenses records and even papers of matches gone. Every major part of the frame of a brand new portable typewriter had been broken and the ribbon transport carefully bent so it wouldn't work -without a scratch to the case. My tape recorder had been carefully fixed so that it couldn't record but would indicate it was recording. These two things effectively interfered with my interviewing of witnesses, whose statement I could neither record nor type. The typewriter had to be junked and the factory has not been able to repair the tape recorder properly. Records and local merchant involved confirm all of this.

By possibly unrelated coincidence, my friend in Minneapolis shared an office with an Army-intelligence connected associate, recently arrived in Minneapolis. When my friend had reason to believe his property was regularly but clandestinely examined, he searched the desk of this newcomer one day and located a personal-history statement including Army-intelligence experience. Prudently, he copied it. Shortly after my speech and these experiences, including exposure and ridiculing of those with the tape recorder in the audience, this man left Minneapolis is what appears to be unusual haste, going to Alaska. There, rather soon, while in a small airplane, he was shot through the head and died as a result. This information is all second-hand and I neither say nor suggest it is related, but I do think it a strange coincidence.

In November 1968 I had a similar experience flying from Dallas to New Orleans. I arrived at the first stop, without baggage. In that case as I had in Minneapolis, I made the reservation by phone. In the Dallas case, when Eastern delivered my baggage early the next morning, they told me they had been told what they simply couldn't believe, that all of my luggage had been stuck in the chute. Picture of one-a-minute planes stacked over Love Field because a baggage chute was jammed for hours! And not discovered! In New Orleans I had also insisted upon a phone call to Dallas in my presence and that of a friend who had met me. Again, my luggage has been ransacked, which is not consistent with accidental mishandling. Nor is the impossible explanation.

On an earlier trip to New Orleans, my room had been ransacked, my address-book stolen, and minor photographic items not mine were left in my attache case.

There is a rather odd and officially-hidden and unexplained Army intelligence involvement in the investigation of the assassination of President Kennedy. An operative named Powell was at the scene. His presence there and the fact that he had taken at least one picture were hidden for some time. The Army never told the Warren Commission, for the existing records, nor did it tell the FBI or Secret Service until some time later. Then it was because of something dropped by the Dallas police. The FBI also failed to inform the Commission that Powell immediately entered the Texas School Book Depository Building and was, with others, confined there for some time by the police, who were keeping anyone they could from leaving. Whether or not it is asking too much to believe that an Army intelligence man is on the scene with a camera when a President is assassinated and takes but a single picture, that picture does not exist in the Warren Commission files, which also contain no indication it was ever given to the Commission. I have initiated proceedings under the Freedom of Information Act to obtain further records and the picture or pictures. You are welcome to the FBI and Secret Service reports that I now have.

Why the Army did not rush its witness to the FBI and Secret Service I cannot begin to suggest. Nor can I explain their withholding of the witness and his possibly important evidence. But the records I have are subject to no other interpretation than that the Army was mute until exposed by the Dallas police.

Paraphrasing, I think the nullification of the Freedom of Information Law by the executive branch and what amounts to the abuse of those seeking to obtain their rights under it might make a fitting subject for inquiry by your subcommittee. Here also my files, especially of non-stop lies by the Department of Justice, including even under oath, are available to you. There is no device to demeaning or too shabby for official use if it will delay or avoid compliance with the law or frustration of inquiry.

At the risk of sounding paranoid, I suggest these recent disclosures may relate to what can probably never be proved, a rash of threats that took several forms. I have no knowledge of who made them or why, only that they were made. Suddenly, on just about every program on which I appeared in 1967 and possibly early 1968, people would phone in, anonymously, and ask if I did not fear some hurt would befall me. When I was away from home, sometimes the same kind of anonymous calls were made to my wife. There were also threatening calls made to me in the middle of the night, one of which I was able to tape and give the local police. It was rather professional, requiring what is not normally at the elbow of the average nut with telephonia at 2:30 a.m. - the sound-track of the movie "Shane", the story of which is appropriate to such a threat. In the course of attempting to prepare myself so that I might better make such a tape when not anticipating the need in advance, I also learned how simply and unobtrusively phones can be tapped and have been in this area - which is the location of Fort Detrick and intermittent activity against chemical and biological warfare. Paralleling these phoned-in threats during appearances was some also-professional "baiting" involving deliberate misrepresentation of an innocent event in my earlier writing career, long before the baiters were born, the kind of thing of which they could not have had personal knowledge.

May I suggest that this violation of every American principle and the most basic rights by the Army is not as completely inconsistent with some of its past as might be hoped. You should have no trouble finding copies of the most extreme anti-democratic "training manuals" official produced and used, some on the recent past. I recall one from the 30s in which the Army called democracy "mobocracy" and gave this to recruits as part of their indoctrination. He may not recall it and may not now be able to locate it, but I gave my copy to Ben Gilbert about 1938 and he never returned it. And, during the course of an investigation of the Silver Shirts at about that time, I obtained some of their files indicating that a high Army general was planning a military putsch against Roosevelt. I gave this to the FBI which, naturally, never said anything about it. But that General soon retired, as I now recall it.

My interest in such extremists continues. Presently I have a source inside the Minutemen. I have received from him (and loaned the FBI) a recent listing in which they have rather extensive tabulations of students and others members of organizations they do not like, where there is inference something should happen to these people. One is for the State of Illinois. If you get the names of those the Army spied upon, you might care to compare it with mine. (The Minutemen, by the way, have been able to obtain and reprint classified Army manuals. I have obtained several and given them to a police department from which, should it interest you, I am certain I can obtain copies. These contain instructions for booby-trapping, making and placing explosives, guerrilla warfare and other such respectable civilian pursuits.)

In this very proper, really vital, interest in intrusion into citizens' rights by government, I hope you will not restrict yourself to the Army, for other and civilian agencies do the same thing, and I also hope you will regard it as only slightly less reprehensible when it happens to writers as well as legislators. Least of all, in a society such as ours, should it happen to either group.

Further, correct as your and Congressman Mikva's positions are, that all of this impropriety should be ended immediately, with dismissal of those involved, I suggest that is inadequate. The complete destruction of every form of all such information should be a minimum. With the exchanges between agencies in the era of computers, this may not be easily accomplished.

Whatever I have that may interest you is, of course, available to you. I would like to protect my sources, especially the one inside the Minutemen, who might be killed if exposed, and the one who provided the proof of CIA spying on me and others through a front, for retaliation against him is also possible. I can produce this man, should you want to question him in private. Or, should you care to send one of your investigators here (only an hour from your office), I think I can arrange for him to be here if he can get time off from his present employer.

In any event, I'd like to be placed on your mailing list to receive everything you publish on this and related matters, for at some point my own writing will include this area.

Thanks for this important public service you are rendering. It is indispensable to freedom.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

cc: Sen. Bathias, Cong. Mikva